

IDEOLOGIES AND STRUCTURES OF HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTION MODEL: RECONSTRUCTING THE WORLDVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract: The objective of this paper is to discuss the current scenario of higher education system vis-a-vis the diverse ideologies and structures of higher education model. It describes the current orientation of higher education delivery characterized by widely accepted norm-referenced higher education performance instead of limited focus on criterion-referenced approaches. The paper also describes a number of higher education best practices in early Islamic and Western institutions, and registers some challenges faced by Muslims in relation to higher education system. It also attempts to chart the way forward for the effort to reconstruct the 'accepted' worldview on higher education.

Keywords: Higher Education, Islamic Institution, Western Institution, Worldview.

Introduction

Higher Education has been an essential engine of economic and social development since centuries ago, and its roles has undergone transformation across time and spaces. Higher Learning Institution has diversified from providing teaching and learning opportunities to the locals to playing other significant roles, instrumental in advancing the society, and nation. The perennial changes in the trajectory of Higher Education (HE), characterized by convergence of forces of globalization, information and communications technologies, and changes of human lifestyle, require Higher Learning Institution (HLI) to be significantly able in playing their roles. Many universities in the Muslim world and South-south countries are currently undertaking the effort to strengthen the structure and activities of Higher Education. Given the various challenges, rapid development of science and technology, complexity of human lifestyles, uncertain future, coupled with the presence of various modes of Higher Education provision, there is a need for HLI to respond strategically to these challenges and in turn prepare their institutions for even more challenges in the future. This necessitates academic leaders to understand the roles of HE, by comprehending the historical and fundamental drive for the establishment of great HLI in history.

The second Resolution of the Muslim University Vice Chancellor Forum acknowledges the diverse structures and ideologies of HE model. This scenario demands Muslim Universities to focus to judiciously carry their roles, especially in the areas expected of an HLI as determined by the society or the values the HLI subscribes. In this regard, this paper attempts to address both expectations, encapsulating them as criterion referenced education and norm referenced education, respectively. These concepts will be discussed later in this paper.

Assessment in the literature of Higher Education shows that the structure of contemporary HE emulates the structure of HLI in developed countries, especially in the Europe. Hence the objective of this paper is to discuss the fundamental criteria in the ethos of a university. In so doing, this paper presents a brief overview of remarkably prestigious HLI of early HE systems in the world over, their *raison d'être*, ideologies and structures of Higher Education model. It also discusses the landscape of the current scenario of Higher Education system. It also outlines the challenges faced by Muslims in relation to Higher Education system, and describes the *raison d'être* of a number of HE, and their best practices.

Remarkably Prestigious HLI of Early HE Systems

This section discusses a number of remarkably prestigious HLI in the world over, their ideologies and structures. The term ideology could be referred to as a system of ideas that concern the social, political or religious ideas which are shared by a social group or movement (Teun A. Van Dijk, 2000). It serves as the fundamental beliefs of the group and its members which shape their social practices. In the context of this paper, it is argued that the model or structure (components, framework, or forms) of HE is determined by or based on an ideology subscribed by a particular society where an HLI operates. This section highlights a number of significant models of HE namely the models by the University of Paris, Harvard University, the University of Halle, the University of Berlin, the University of Phoenix, al-Zaytouna University, al-Azhar University, the University of Qayrawan, al-Qarawiyyin University and other institutions.

The University of Paris

The University of Paris was established in the 12th century (between 1150 and 1170), and essentially based on theology. Her mission was to serve the society, through the services that she provided to the church - the primary institution of Christendom (Cobb, 2002). Given most Christians regard Christian faith, reason and scholarly knowledge as supportive of each other, they held to the general assumption that if one knew more or reason better, he or she could articulate better Christian faith. Stated another way, education system during this era upheld the idea that learning and faith are mutually supportive endeavor, thus the objective of university education lies on the aim to adopting and nurturing the Christian tradition among students (Is-haq, 2011).

As regard the curriculum, the fundamental mission of the University of Paris is theology. This is reflected in its tradition of liberal education characterized by the significance of the trivium of grammar, the emphasis on the teaching of logic and rhetoric, and the aim at advancing and nurturing faith through curriculum. The focus on the teaching of quadrivium; geometry, arithmetic, music and astronomy also signified the promotion of theology (Is-haq, 2011). All in all, the curriculum was designed to educate students to think and relate their thinking to the presence of God, such as in the teaching of geometry, which is not only training the students to measure the earth but the consciousness of the presence of God. More importantly, the curriculum in the University of Paris also emphasized the teaching and learning of Latin, given its status as the official language of the church.

Though the curriculum in the University of Paris is epistemologically theology, the university also had two graduate professional schools; medicine, and canon law. The school of theology would first train students for thirty-two months in the faculty of liberal arts, and the student will subsequently continue for a period of additional five and a half years in the school of medicine in order to become a physician; or four years and an additional forty months in order to become a doctor of canon law (Cobb, 2002). The Paris model has been emulated by the Oxford and Cambridge universities in England, as well as Harvard College, in Boston, USA though the medium of instruction were Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, and Aramaic but maintain the same basic purpose and form of education.

Harvard University

Harvard University, the oldest educational institution in the United States, was founded sixteen years after the arrival of the Pilgrims at Plymouth, Massachusetts. The university was established by the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1636, named after John Harvard of Charlestown, Massachusetts. The main role of Harvard University was to educate the English and (American) Indian youths in knowledge and godliness (Is-haq, 2011). The curriculum was based on English college in Oxford and Cambridge, in the United Kingdom, mainly due to the influence of a number of Cambridge and Oxford graduates who were the colonist in America (Harvard, 2012). Even the city where Harvard University is located is named after Cambridge. The courses offered at Harvard College's were similar to that of Cambridge and Oxford universities though initially the duration of studies was only three years. The curriculum at Harvard became a model for American education institutions, including colleges, grammar schools and academies that prepared students for higher learning and collegiate studies (Harvard University, 2012).

As regard the courses offered by Harvard, in its early years, Harvard College offered a classic academic course based on the English university model combined with the colonists' Puritan philosophy. In fact, the foundation of curriculum at Harvard, since its formation until the eighteenth century was theological. In the early nineteenth-century, studies at Harvard expanded when the curriculum started to include Latin, Greek, mathematics, and astronomy. Besides, the curriculum also focus on English composition, philosophy, theology, natural philosophy, and either Hebrew or French. In the 19th century, the curriculum at Harvard was transformed allowing the university to accommodate broader coverage of curriculum as well as more specialized interests of students. It permitted students to take elective courses in HLI system, reflecting her readiness to be more responsive to the many evolving democratic, technological, and vocational needs of the society. The most common forms of instruction were oral exercises – the lecture, the declamation, and the disputation.

The University of Halle

The University of Halle was established in the era of socio-religious transformation, characterized by the change of identity among Europeans. It was in the 17th century, when the predominance of the Christian faith and the church had started to significantly diminish. This is the turning point when many nation states started to have religious wars and crisis that lead people to be dissatisfied with religion (Is-haq, 2011). This has ultimately led to the separation of state from church which used to be so attached to each other in the previous centuries. During this era, Europeans prefer the identity of French, Prussian or English to Catholic, Lutheran or Anglican.

The shift in religious identification had a bearing on human lifestyle, and their orientation including in the education system that they emulated, and provided to the society. This is reflected in the establishment of the University of Halle which focus was different from that of the University of Paris and Harvard University mainly due to her focus on free inquiry, scientific ways of thinking, and rationalism. Note that the model does not pair rationalism with theology but on free inquiry instead. The other focus was scientific ways of thinking, and even the teaching of Latin was abandoned, replaced German as the language of instruction (Cobb, 2002). The curriculum focused on equipping students to work for the State instead of for the service of the Church as was the case in the University of Paris. Even the mission of the university was to support the progress of the worldly attainment, for the practical benefit of men and society, without linking it to theology (Ringer, 1969). Stated another way, the main aim of Halle University curriculum is to prepare her students for work or employment, instead of the ability to preserve their religions tradition or culture, let alone to nurture the awareness on the presence of God.

The University of Berlin

The emphasis on scientific approach was also the approach and main orientation of the University of Berlin was established in 1810 by the liberal Prussian educational reformer and linguist Wilhelm von Humboldt (Is-haq, 2011). The university was influenced by the model of Higher Education in Europe, but with the focus on research, and subscribed to the freedom to teach and study. The university thus stood on the view that she needs to champion research that can bring about truth to the society. Nevertheless the focus on truth is unlike the attempt to nurture truth undertaken by the University of Paris which sought truth as per the teaching of Christianity that is the truth of God. The focus by the German intellectuals is secularized truth instead of an overarching all inclusive Truth (Cobb, 2002). The University of Berlin was planned to be a true research university in the form of research-intensive university. This has eventually influenced other German universities and others in the world who emulated the university such as John-Hopkins University.

The University of Phoenix

The University of Phoenix, Arizona which was established in 1976 indicated a more radical departure from the early HE models. Instead of focusing on religion or belief system, employment, and research, the university focused on developing economic order. It was conceptualized based on the notion that the future of the world depends much on the economic power, justifying the need to turn the function of education from serving the religion to equipping individuals to become human capital in their nation, and in turn serve as drivers of economic growths (Cobb, 2002). The idea of university is related to the objective of training individuals to become competitive, have the ability in securing and retaining good jobs more than the focus or aim to develop students' value systems (Is-haq, 2011). HE would no longer be the privilege of the elite, and must be made widely avail to all in the society. The main purpose is to enhance their employment prospects (Is-haq, 2011). In short, HE is an inevitable engine for economic growth characterized by its roles as an essential sector in preparing individuals to make living, or and society to generate income. The University has physical and virtual campuses on the cyber space or web.

Al-Zaytouna University

Al-Zaytouna University was established in 737 (120 AH) in (Tunisia), five years after the foundation of al-Zaytouna Mosque. Al-Zaytouna Masjid-College in Tunisia could be the oldest in the Muslim world. For many centuries it was the center of Islamic learning in North Africa, together with Qayrawan in Tunisia and al-Qarawiyyin in Fez, Morocco. Following the traditional masjid-college system, al-Zaytouna produced many illustrious scholars such as the Maliki scholar Sidi Ali Ben Ziyad, the theologian Ibn Arafah Maliki, as well as the Andalusian scholars Ibn al-Abbar. In modern times al-Zaytouna has produced great intellectuals and reformers including Mohamed Tahir Ben Achour, Tahir Haddad, Abdelaziz Thaalbi, the Algerian reformer Abdelhamid Ben Badis and Abu el-Kacem Chebbi. In terms of fame and prestige, however, al-Zaytouna has always been overshadowed by the University of Qayrawan (al-Qatri, 1985).

Al-Azhar University

Al-Azhar University was established by the Fatimids in the 10th century. The university has been the most celebrated center of Islamic learning throughout the world. For more than 1000 years it has produced the most eminent Islamic scholars who went on to become leaders of Muslim communities, institutions and movements. It operated as Masjid-Jami' (congregational mosque for where Jum'a prayers are performed), and was known as a traditional Masjid-College.

The focus of al-Azhar could be divided into at least two major emphases, attributed to the dynamic process of development of the university. This is due to the changes the university faced throughout its history, characterized by different orientation or ideologies of her governing authority, which had to abide by controls imposed by the state. Interestingly, al-Azhar education system was subjected to different ideologies of her governing authorities such as the Fatimids, Ayyubi Dynasty, Ottomans, Mamluks, and others who were ruling Egypt. For instance after defeating the Mamluks in 1517, the Ottomans maintained al-Azhar as the greatest academic institution in Muslim lands, helping them to produce much needed administrators, teachers, lawyers and judges. Napoleon's invasion of Egypt at the end of the 18th century changed the course of history of al-Azhar. Muslim scholars suddenly came face-to-face with superior western science and technology. While some scholars rejected modern sciences and preferred to continue with business as usual, the government's adoption of modern systems and its fateful decision to send Egyptian scholars to western institutions eventually had an impact. The modernization of the early 20th century, however, effectively made al-Azhar a state-owned educational institution with allocations in the national budget. While this step helped to ensure the institution of adequate financial resources, it somehow limits academic freedom. This epitomizes the idea that the objective of HE should be tailor made according to the requirement of the state in which the university is operating, and that its curriculum must be in tandem with the direction of the state. Even al-Azhar had further evolved from traditional Masjid-College to a modern university between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, and that her curriculum was gradually expanded from solely dealing with Islamic studies and Arabic language to become a comprehensive modern university offering specializations in the various Islamic and Arabic disciplines as well as professional studies in education, medicine, architecture, economics, modern languages, etc (Inan, 1958).

The University of Qayrawan

The University of Qayrawan was established based on the Great Mosque, Jami' 'Uqba. The mosque was built between 670 and 680 by 'Uqba Ibn Nafi', Qayrawan's intellectual life should also have began around that time. Imam Malik Ibn Anas (founder of the Maliki madhhab) who died in 795 considered Qayrawan to be a leading center of learning, at par with Mecca, Medina, Kufa, and Basra. It effectively became the center of the Maliki madhhab, producing it most illustrious scholars, including Yahya Ibn Salam al-Basri, Asad Ibn al-Furat, Ibn Sahnun, and Abu Muhammad 'Abd Allah Abi Zayd 'Abd al-Rahman al-Qayrawani (310-86/922-96). Ibn Abi Zayd's Risalah is until now the foremost textbook of Maliki fiqh. In conjunction with Masjid Uqbah Qayrawan's Aghlabid rulers also established a Bayt al-Hikmah (like that of Baghdad) and a teaching hospital, making it a center of excellence in philosophy, natural sciences, and medicine. Many graduates of Qayrawan went on to become among the foremost scholars of medieval Europe, translating knowledge from Arabic into Latin and other European languages. These include Constantine the African (Constantinus Africanus) whose translations contributed to the development of Salerno as a center of learning; and Ibn al-Jazzar, who was famous in medieval Europe as Algizar for his great books on medicine. Due to historical circumstances, however, especially the raids by the Egyptian Banu Hilal, supported by the Fatimid rulers in the 12th century (Fikri, 2009; Tawili, 2001).

Al-Qarawiyyin University

Al-Qarawiyyin Mosque was founded in 859 by a young princess who migrated with her father from Qairawan (present Tunisia) to Fez (Morocco). The western district of Fez where the family was locally known as al-Qarawiyyin is a place where migrants from Qairawan settled. Following the traditional Masjid-Jami' role, this mosque provided a learning centre for the Qairawaniyyin community, in addition to being a place of worship. Starting with religious studies and Arabic language, it gradually extended its education to the natural sciences, logic, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry and even history, geography and music. Due to overwhelming demand from students, mainly from the Maghrib (North

Africa), the college introduced a system of rigorous entrance examinations focusing mainly on memorization and understanding of the Qur'an and mastery of the Arabic language. Al-Qarawiyyin produced many illustrious scholars including the great Maliki scholar al-Fasi, the famous al-Idrisi, the Sufi Ibn al-'Arabi, as well as the historian Ibn Khaldun. Many European scholars also studied at al-Qarawiyyin including the Andalusian Jewish philosopher Maimonides (Musa Ibn Maimun), the Christian Gerbert of Aurillac (930-1003), famously known as Pope Sylvester II, and the Belgian Nichola Louvain who studied therein the 16th century (al-Qatri, 1985).

Current Scenario of HE System

The previous section provides a brief overview on the characteristics of the early HE institutions, both in the Europe and Muslim countries. This section attempts to provide an overview of the current scenario of HE system, by highlighting the aspects.

Structure

It was gathered in the previous discussion that there were a number of salient categorizations of HLI such as research intensive (the University of Berlin), comprehensive (al-Azhar University), and theology-religious university (the University of Paris). Similarly, the current structure of HE is also characterized by the presence of different HLI categories. Categorization provides somewhat a clear structure of HE types, characterized by the different types of foci in HE systems such as (a) research and postgraduate universities; (b) specialized, including science and technology and comprehensive universities; (c) four-year universities and liberal arts colleges; and (d) community colleges (Abdul Rahman, 2012). Each of them with specific and complementary roles to support the missions and need of the country. They either operate as public or private universities, and community colleges (Chantavit & Ropharat, 2011). Each category of university has different direction, and may not necessarily include the agenda to complement or engage each other in supporting the national agenda. The aims of the categorization of HLI are not clear especially in responding to the holistic needs of the country. There is still diverse focus of HLI despite the categorization made. Though an HLI is categorized as a Research University, it has to manage other than the core businesses including pre-university stage which to some is to the advantages of the institution (Abdul Rahman, 2012).

Governance

The previous review also showed the roles played by the state in shaping the direction of an HLI. In al-Azhar, for example, the roles played by the state in shaping the governance structure and policy of the university has lead to the change in the power to appoint Shaykh al-Azhar (Rector) - From the freedom to choose the Rector among the most eminent scholars of the four Sunni madhhab, to the appointment made by the head of state. Similarly, the nature and character of HLI today are determined by the intervention of the Government, mainly in funding and rationing student intakes. The government shaped major policy directions, set up proper legislation to govern university which operates in their state, or territory. In some countries the highest authority for HE lies with the minister responsible for higher education, education, or training. The ministry provides strategic direction and overseeing the development of the sub-sector in HE. In Malaysia, the ministry's mission is to create an HE environment that will foster the development of academic and institutional excellence, through coordinated programmes of the National Higher Education Strategic Plan (Abdul Rahman, 2012), aimed to raise the capacity for knowledge and innovation and nurture 'first class' mentality among Malaysian. The HE plans focus on the following levels: (a) Individual — developing human capital with the first-class mentality; (b) Institutional — creating a conducive environment that fosters academic and institutional excellence, (c) National — achieving international recognition and sustainability for the Malaysian Higher Education system, and (d) International — positioning Malaysia as a hub for Higher Education in the region and worldwide.

Funding

An important aspect which deserves mention in the discussion of HE provision is the discussion on HE funding and financing. Many HLI are set up by state, which provides funding for the HLI infrastructure, facilities and operational expenditures, making the state to also provide governance to HLI. People-established institutions are established and sponsored by the communities for their facilities, infrastructure, and operational expenditures. Private institutions are funded by social, professional, economic organizations or individuals for their infrastructure, facilities and operational expenditures. A lesson learned from al-Azhar University is on the engagement of philanthropist from donors to well-wishers in supporting the provision of Higher Education. It was reported that al-Azhar had always been financed through Waqf (Charitable Endowment) in addition to occasional gifts from rulers and other well-wishers (Inan, 1958).

Ethos

In general, the direction of HLI is influenced or determined by the goal or vision of a particularly country, mostly encapsulated in the objectives that concern the development of workforce for their countries, and nation building (Abdul Rahman, 2012). In other words, the direction of HE is shaped by the national aspirations, such as the aspiration to produce graduates and researchers for social and economic development. The Government of Thailand, for instance, has the mission to reposition the Thai HE system be an important sector that responds to the emerging needs of the society and economy. HLI serve national priorities, and strategies; as well as address the global, national, and local demands. In so doing, HLI are equipped and mandated to produce more researchers, who would be instrumental to the development of Higher Education's academic excellence (Chantavit & Ropharat, 2011).

Education Curriculum

Education curriculum in HLI has been designed to ensure that it responds, supports or accommodate the expectation of stakeholders. Employers, among others, have been regarded as an important group of stakeholders. For instance, the currently much debated issues on employability originated from employers who had excessively register their dissatisfaction with the quality of graduates, attributed to the ostensibly weak curriculum delivered HLI (Abdul Rahman & Shuib, 2011). Without denying the claim, various efforts have been taken to incorporate, or even adopt, every expectation made by the employers. In fact there has been effort to integrate the conventional discipline-related courses with entrepreneurship within the university curriculum so that graduates who complete HE studies are more prepared to join the world of work especially when the job market for graduates is very tight (Sirat *et.al.*, 2012). In this context, HE in its early days provided courses that lead to the conferment of degrees, higher degrees, and postgraduate diplomas, offered at universities and other HLI in a wide range of disciplinary areas. It is conducted via various modes of delivery in the form of examination only, distance education, conventional approach, and mixed mode delivery. The curriculum is also influenced by increasing changing global Higher Education landscape, such as al-Azhar which Higher Education curriculum which respond to the international need, and in turn benefit many students from inside and outside Egypt.

Quality of HE System

The focus of HE is viewed from five different but related dimensions namely quality as exceptional (for example, high standard HE), quality as consistency (for example, zero defects), quality as fitness for purpose (fitting customer specifications), quality as value for money (as efficiency and effectiveness), and quality as transformative (Harvey & Knight, 1996; Harvey & Green, 1993). In some countries,

universities are undergoing transformative process that includes empowerment to substantiate the roles of HLI in nurturing sustainable development (Sirat *et.al.*, 2009). As regard the notion of quality that pertains the fitness for purpose (fitting customer specifications), many HLI considers the fitness by measuring the rate of graduate employment, as this signifies whether their graduate could be easily absorbed in the job market. This is due to the fact that employers and the market-driven economy require graduates to be able to significantly contribute to the modern profit-oriented organisations. Their main priority is expeditious job securing process which could contribute effectively to their organisations (Harvey & Mason, 1996).

Diversified Roles of HE Sector

Besides the revision of HE curricula the changes in the stakeholders' landscape have also posed great challenges to the structure, system and culture within universities (Sirat *et.al.*, 2012). This leads to the revision of various HE policies, such that have been experienced by many countries through HE transformation plan. Through the transformation, the roles of universities have been revisited, aimed at repositioning them to be central to the whole debate about human capital development. In the context of the present shift from knowledge to innovation economy, the role of universities in generating intellectual capital has been augmented so that universities would serve as important institutions that support not only the world of work, but serve as a catalyst of change and development for a country's economy and society. In many countries HLIs or universities have been engaged to serve as think tank for the government across various areas without limiting it to sciences and technology alone but also the sustainability of cultural values. University is entrusted to play significant roles in substantiating the development of the society. University is regarded as the prime-mover for the development of real sector workforces, manufacturing and service sectors. Some universities have the advantage and capabilities in educating the world as well. By and large, the mission of HE is not only to advance the economic and social development of the country, but also that of the world over (Abdul Rahman, 2012; Phillips & Hoare, 2011). Education thus has been regarded as a source of financial income or engine for economic growth, especially when it has the ability to attract international students, such as in the case of many European countries.

Raison d'Être of Early HE Systems

The above section discusses the different objective of HE in the early era. It is learnt that the objectives depend on the need of certain space and time, as well as the focus of the providers. This section attempts to discern the main objectives or *raison d'être* of Higher Education in the early and contemporary time. In the early era of education provision, the objectives of HE are mainly two folds; teaching religion and promoting the traditions of the people. It was reported that the origins of modern education are the Greeks, the Romans and the Chinese (Is-haq, 2011). The Athenian system of education originated from the education system of Sparta, focusing on regimented life and rigorous physical training. In fact, the goals of the Greek education system is to attain 'Kalos' agathos' or ('the wise and good' man). The system starts with reading, writing, music, gymnastics, sports and dancing, followed by art, science, geometry, arithmetic, grammar and rhetoric when students reach a higher level of education. This leads to the creating of wisdom and goodness to dominate much of Greek academic enquiry (Is-haq, 2011). Besides the Romans and Greeks system, another society which has a well-established education system is the Chinese and Indian education. The former focused on the teaching and learning of philosophy, poetry and religion, reinforcing the teachings of Confucius and Laozi. The latter also based their education system on Hindu tradition, emphasizing the study of prayer, philosophy, morality, law and government. The Jews too developed an education system that was essentially theological (Is-haq, 2011). The following points highlight the main objectives of HE as gathered from various HE models. It discusses the diverse ideologies and structures of Higher Education models, and describes the HE best practices in early Islamic and western institutions.

Philosophy

As stated earlier, the Greeks education system, which is based on philosophy, has made impact on many Higher Education systems, mainly due to the work of Socrates, Plato, Isocrates, Zeno, Epicurus, and Aristotle. The curriculum of Greek education model includes the study of literature, music, law, gymnastics, rhetoric, dialectics, geometry and astronomy, later emulated by the Roman education system.

Religion

Besides having philosophy as the basis of education, it was also found that education was also based on religion and belief system. The Chinese education for example emphasized the teaching and learning religion, in addition to the teaching and learning of philosophy, poetry and the teachings of their ancestors like Confucius and Laozi. The Indians' virile education system is based on their Hindu tradition, characterized by education content that include the study of prayer, philosophy, morality, law and government. In Thailand, some of the education system has grown out of the Buddhist teaching, and some are based on Western models (Cobb, 2002). In fact, the Paris and Harvard model of HE also originated from the teaching of religion, and their purposes of HE was to serve Christianity in that graduates and professors are orientated to be the workers for religion. This was also the case for al-Azhar University HE model in their early years.

Balanced Focus

The above institutions did not, however, sideline the need to equip students or focus their academic activities on aspects that cover worldly life such as the study or research in medical area, laws and other professional programmers. Among the lessons learnt from al-Azhar include the emphasis of education on both religious teaching and the needs of the society (knowledge, skills, and other attributes). A good blend between both the acquired and divine knowledge were the main focus or orientation of the early models. As time passes by, the objective of equipping students or the orientation of HE focus onto the aspects other than religious teaching has escalated. This is mainly due to the shift on the emphasis to produce individuals, who are apt for other sectors, especially the world of work. The shift from having a balanced religion-professional focus to professional emphasis was further reinforced by the need for having employable graduates, true to the expectations of many stakeholders, discussed in the following points.

Community Engagement

An essential role played by universities in the early days is that their professors participated in the development of community, by training individuals to be specialists in certain discipline of knowledge such as law, medicine, grammar, rhetoric, architecture, mathematics and mechanics (Owolabi, 2003).

Employment

A great concern has been given by HE on the need to serve the world of work (Cobb, 2002). In many countries, the primary objectives of HE is to develop competent workforce for the country, requiring all HLI to equip student with required competencies, and in turn be the creative and innovative workforce for the country. Nowadays, many Higher Education model function to serve the capitalist market characterized by the roles of public schools in producing workers for the market, and Higher Education in producing engineers, scientists, accountants, managers, consultants, and executives for corporations, as well as the teachers, doctors, and lawyers required for the market society (Cobb, 2002).

Academic Discipline

On the contrary, despite the struggle to produce employable individuals to serve the job market, many academics are still devoting their work to advance the knowledge of their disciplines, and contribution to develop the society. To them, the effort to contribute to the development of knowledge is more important and meaningful compared to serving the job market. Cobb (2002) stated that there are even academics whose loyalty is to the discipline than to serving their institution, particularly if the latter focus more on producing workforce for the market.

Criterion-Referenced Versus Norm-Referenced Higher Education Approaches

Given the above description of HE focus, and *raison d'être*, this section attempts to assess the fundamentals or criteria that serve as basis the development of a university ethos, and its curriculum. The assessment of the ethos is made by typifying them into two categories of orientation, norm referred and criterion referenced orientation. The two concepts, which originate from testing and assessment discipline, discuss the bases of determining the way a measure is developed, scored, and interpreted. They were introduced by Robert Glaser American educational psychologist in 1963, and emerged as important concepts within the discipline of education. Criterion-referenced assessment is judgment based on preset criteria (Biggs & Tang, 2007). Norm-referenced assessment is judgment on the performance of someone or something made based on the performance, achievement, or expectation of a group of individuals.

The previous section provided fundamental ideas that HE models have undergone various stage of transformation, starting with criterion-referenced education models, evident in their epistemology of HE curriculum. The curriculum of HE was originally developed based on the teaching of religion more than the expectation or regulation from other parties who were not in the HE sector. In other words, HLIs were not subordinating to other sectors including the state and employers. The main reference for HE development or curriculum was the criteria set by the teaching of religion. For example, the University of Paris model adopts value-based education which was substantiated by a system of ideas or ideology shared by the majority social group during that time. The education curriculum was guided by the teaching of Christianity, and its language was the official language of Christianity. Nevertheless, the University of Paris model did not neglect the importance of worldly matter, but viewed it as supporting the effort to enhance faith amongst individuals in the society, mainly by linking the acquired knowledge or science with that of the Christian teaching. The ultimate aim is the attainment of meaningful life, and acknowledging the presence of God.

The education curriculum in Harvard University showed the emergence of an epistemologically sound and broader scope of curriculum, departing from only being shaped by the teaching of Christianity to responding to the changing human lifestyle and other societal needs. Harvard had played much impact to the society so much so that it has been known that when Harvard University 'speaks', the country 'listens' (Harvard University, 2012). Being the country's premier university, Harvard shaped the direction of education in the United States, and other sectors as well. Most of the Harvard first graduates became ministers throughout New England, while other graduates entered government service or private business.

Over time, as human life became more complicated, and when human activities turned increasingly specialized, the need for professionals or skilled workforce become more important than the need for knowledgeable or religious people. The emphases have then shifted from producing religious-focused graduates to skill-focused ones. In developing the curriculum that addresses the needs of job market, HLIs refer to employers who tell universities the criteria of graduates whom they require. HLIs then tailor made their curriculum based on the expectations, and graduates were equipped and made to study the subject matter which was only required by the world of work at the expenses of other fundamental

knowledge - the religious education. Thus the main reference in determining the focus and curriculum of an HLI is the information provided by the majority group of stakeholders, especially the employers. This trend marked the beginning of education which is based on the context or norms, befitting the suggested term of norm-referenced education model.

Challenges Faced by Muslims in Relation to Higher Education System

The focus on norm-referenced - education has not all the time brought about good impacts to many, especially the students and academics. The following section attempts to register some of the challenges faced by HLIs due to the prevalence of norm-referenced education system. It was found that many countries are currently making progress or advancement in their HE system. Nevertheless, there are pressing issues or scenario in which demand perusal from HE subject matter experts.

Stakeholders' Expectation or Regulation

As regard stakeholders, the current focus is highly placed on meeting the expectation of industry or employers. Expectation from NGOs or CSOs and society have not been given due attention. A university quality is currently measured based on output mainly on her roles in preparing graduates for employers. There has been less effort to check whether the graduates meet the need of their society or community, let alone the expectation of their religion. Indeed, it is not sufficient to consider or interpret quality as meeting the needs and requirement of the employers only.

Employment-Focused Curriculum

The current focus in Higher Education provision is highly placed on meeting the expectation of industry or employers. A university quality is even measured based on her roles in preparing graduates for employers. The focus has only been on economic instead of an equal focus on social development. Indeed, it is not sufficient to consider or interpret quality of an HLI by judging based on their capacity to meeting the needs and requirement of the employers only.

Institutional Ethos

On the focus of serving as an agency of the state, the main aim of an HLI is to ensure that all policies are in line with that of the national direction. It is afraid that this may lead to having similar activities among HLIs without honoring and delivering the unique mission of each HLI. Stated another way, adhering to the main stakeholder's directions may lead an HLI to only focus meeting stakeholders' expectation though they are not in tandem with the ethos of a university, or expectation of the local community (Abdul Rahman, 2012). There is lack of evidence on the involvements or participation of local community (e.g. access to formal and informal education programme) or whether a university has brought about advancement to the local communities.

Governance and Autonomy

The governance structure of HLIs is subjected to different administrative and academic regulation; and financing rules mainly due the dependence of the government which funds the university. This causes high level of constraints that obstructs HLIs especially the public institutions to fulfill their potential to the fullest, let alone to attain the world-class universities.

Funding

Studies shows that HE financing is the responsibility government, especially to finance public HE. Nevertheless, many countries have started to point out that HE should be borne by the students.

Conclusion: Recommended Way Forward for the Effort to Reconstruct the ‘Accepted’ Worldview on Higher Education

Muslim university should develop strategic plans to nurture quality development in HE, aimed at further enabling HLIs to produce or improve the quality of graduates so that they are capable of life-long work and adjustment. The strategic plan, recommended to be a ‘Holistic Education Provision at Higher Learning Institutions’ should reflect an equal focus on the criteria set by the philosophy of education subscribed by an institution, as well as the expectation of Higher Education beneficiaries, thus befitting the need to establish an education system with harmonious focus on criteria and norms.

Universities should provide balanced responses to the need of the society and economy. They are also to serve as think-tank to the nation supporting, driving or substantiating the country’s development. Of essential activity in this agenda is to actively participate in research. University should embark on research related to fundamental needs of the country or society. Research should aim at improving people quality of life (Abdul Rahman, 2012). The research university initiatives, currently being adopted in many countries must conduct locally-oriented and community engaged research, genuinely beneficial research; in line with the needs of the community, country in the areas that could contribute to advance the country’s economy and society. In this regard, there should be proper mechanism to come up with informed-research priority areas for universities to embark.

Universities should champion in the development of new knowledge and create beneficial innovations, both are essential to a society’s competitiveness, and in turn supporting sustainable development of all sectors in the society. For instance academic members must play more roles to empower the society regardless of their location (rural, urban and regional) communities (Kell, Phillips & Hoare, 2011). They must have good balance between accomplishing research, and providing effective teaching and learning; as well as community services. They are to educate learners with competencies, professional and generic knowledge and practical skills relevant to the need of various stakeholders thereby meeting the needs of national construction and defense.

Universities must attend to the need of strengthening the mechanism to ensure the harmonious and complementary link of education systems across all levels. Despite the drive from external stakeholders on the role of an HLI, there should be an internal direction on the scope of HE provision or roles of an HLI in relation to the beneficiaries. In this regard, or some of the Australian system is still exemplary for honoring an HLI distinctive history, mission and scope, and taking into account the pattern of student catchment, inter-sectorial boundaries, geographic location, research specializations, linkages with community and engagement with internationalization (Kell, Phillips & Hoare, 2011).

There is a need to engage driving force in addition to workforce i.e. train more managers to manage HLIs, entailing the need to engage management expertise in advancing universities roles in a given society, and judiciously implement the strategic plans. Expectation from NGOs or CSOs and society must also be given by putting equal efforts to make our graduates meeting the need of their society or community as well. The focus on employability alone is not sustainable as industry-ready is not synonymous to society-ready graduates (Sirat *et.al.*, 2012). In this context, universities may consider operating as a comprehensive institution which approach cut across conducting research, teaching and community service, all are in tandem with the needs of local community, instead of only focusing on one area or level of activities or core business.

Teaching and learning at HLIs must honor the efforts to embed the teaching of values in the study process. This requires the need to have a balanced focus of HE on Humanities, Biological Sciences, and Technology. This is also imperative in order to produce work force who are not only skillful or knowledgeable workforce who uphold and practice decorum at workplace or in their off-the-job

behaviors as well students (Chantavit & Ropharat, 2011). The values should also be upheld by academics, researchers, and students.

This should involve the emphasis on the provision of continuum of Education System, in that the aim is higher quality teaching and learning is to produce well educated workforce, by strengthening synergy between institutions in the training and retraining of graduates, to add values to workforce, services and manufacturing sectors. HE system should have sound management mechanisms, measures for good governance, financing management, Higher Education standards and university networking. HLIs should be supported by competent workforce who provides excellent academic leadership so as to drive their institutions to attain the goals set for the institution. Thus in advancing harmonious HE ecosystem, and productive HE workforce there should a judicious structure of workforce development at HLIs to include the development of academic leaders, who understand the roles of HE, functions of HLIs, and the set of tasks, and responsibilities expected of academia and its staff. In other words, besides the focus on developing subject matter expertise among academia, HLI managers and leaders should also be empowered through professional leadership and management development programmers.

As universities are regarded as the engine for growth and change, HE should be lead by competent academics. This entails the effort to improve university academics credential. Academics should be competent to teach in a various range of environments, be more culturally sensitive and an informed of operating in multi-dimensional global educational communities. The need to generate new body of knowledge and technologies appropriates to the local social and economic development. Besides, there is also need to put in place the networking for certain HLIs to collaborate, thus providing forces and brain power to each institution.

University education should help students acquire in-depth professional knowledge and good practical skills in a profession with the ability to work independently and creatively as well as to solve problems in their fields of study.

Students should master theories, acquire advanced practical skills. It should provide students with advanced level theories and practices with the ability to conduct independent and creative research, to identify and solve emerging issues relating to science and technology and to carry out scientific research and professional activities. University should function based on its objectives of establishment, mission, vision, and goals thus ensuring harmony between the national aspiration and unique ethos of an HLI. It should also be based on the expectation of various stakeholders, necessitating the need to engage different types of community (professional, learning, learned, and wider community) to guide the roles of a university. Universities must engage them in the development of students and local community.

Given the scarcity of government financing, HE institutions also have to allocate their own budget and budget from external sources to efficiently support the conduct of research and innovation. There is thus a need to diversify the sources of funding to include contributions from beneficiaries of HLI outputs. Plan has to be made to identify the ways to source fund for HE, and the extent of efforts to ensure sustainable source of funding, so that HLIs can function effectively and efficiently. But what about research fund? HLIs also need strong financial capacity to make available adequate and well-equipped infrastructure, improve facilities and services, for academic research activities. In countries like Thailand, financing has received due attention from the Government mainly because of its vital roles in supporting the production of research output and innovation in Higher Education institutions (Abdul Rahman, 2012).

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